



Paving Paradise: Why voters won't decide freeway's fate

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 [Freeway may cut through popular mountain preserve](#)

What to preserve and what to pave; It's a question for the Arizona Department of Transportation, but apparently not for voters, at least when it comes to completing a portion of the Loop 202.

The South Mountain Freeway Project was approved in the 1980's. ADOT is proposing linking existing sections of the 202 in the South Valley to I-10 in the West Valley by blasting through part of South Mountain Park and Preserve.

It's a move that is not popular with park regulars like Sean Strickler, "I'd be concerned if they started ripping away at this preserve.

This is one of the nicest areas of Phoenix and there's plenty of room for development on the outskirts of the preserve or even down south of here. I don't see why they need to start ripping away at the mountain and taking away from this oasis everyone likes to enjoy"

Hiker Katie Corless agrees, "I think they should leave it as it is. It's beautiful as it is now." Corless says if she could vote, she'd vote against it. She can't.

Lawmakers passed legislation back in 1990 requiring construction on preserve land to be approved by voters. But, that law doesn't apply according to ADOT's Doug Nintzel, "The statutes are actually on the books".

However, the approval of the South Mountain Freeway occurred prior to that state law which makes the South Mountain Corridor exempt from the statute."

Nintzel says the exact route is not set in stone. ADOT staffers are still working on a federally mandated environmental impact study. A preliminary draft of which is expected to be released sometime this summer.

South Mountain Park and Preserve is often called the largest municipal park in the nation. It covers more than 16,000 acres and attracts some 3 million visitors a year.

To see more information about the park and its history go to:

• [South Mountain Park/Preserve website](#)